

Winter LIHEAP Action Day Press Conference
Remarks of Congressman Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.)
February 9, 2011

“This has been an especially harsh winter. Up in Boston, we’ve been using the Shaq-o-meter to measure how much snow has fallen. Right now, it’s a little bit above his chest—which is to say, my height.

“But snow isn’t the only thing that’s been piling up. Families’ heating bills have been piling up as well. And so have the record number of people who are turning to LIHEAP to help them get through the winter. In my state of Massachusetts alone, LIHEAP is projected to help 250,000 families this winter.

“And energy costs have also skyrocketed. Over the last 5 years, the average cost of heating with heating oil has jumped nearly \$1000, from \$1,337 to \$2,291.

“But even as the mercury drops, House Republicans are considering dropping this important safety net for millions of low-income families nationwide.

“It takes a frigid heart for Republicans to continue to defend tax breaks for oil and gas companies, while putting heating fuel assistance for America’s neediest on the chopping block.

“Tomorrow, the Republicans will unveil their funding bill for the rest of this fiscal year. We must ensure that LIHEAP remains fully funded. Cutting off funds for this program now would mean that millions of families could have their heating cut off this winter.

“Second, we must continue to fund LIHEAP at \$5.1 billion for the next fiscal year, as prices continue to rise and the effects of the recession are still having a chilling effect on the pocketbooks of millions of American families. Returning to 2008 funding levels, as some in the Majority have proposed, would mean forcing 3.1 million families nationwide to return to deciding between heating and eating.

“And finally, we need to turn up the heat on the Majority in the House to continue fully funding this vital program and press for continued action to help American families.”